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The voice of the Darjeeling Hills

# Himalayan Times

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Buddhism in a Nut-shell

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Knowing  
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Rai Bahadur  
R. C. Mintri

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Colonial Laws, Darjeeling  
Tea & Step-Son  
Kalimpong

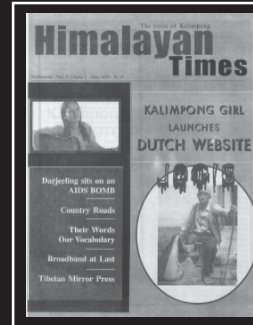
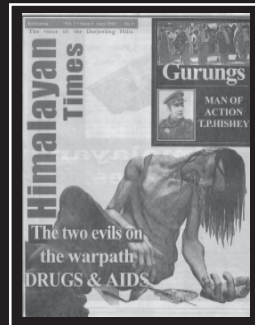
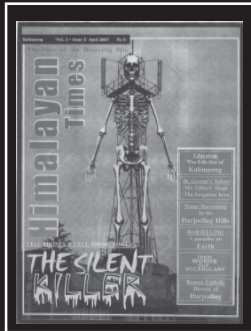
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***The Gorkha Culture and  
GJMM's Project of  
Daura Suruwal-Chawbandi Choli***



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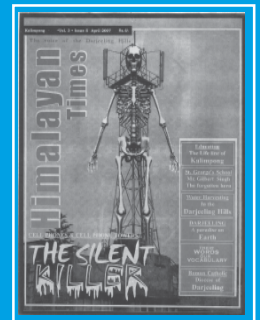
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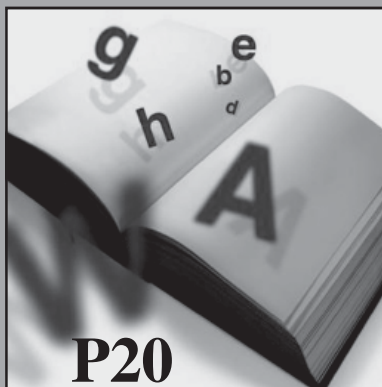
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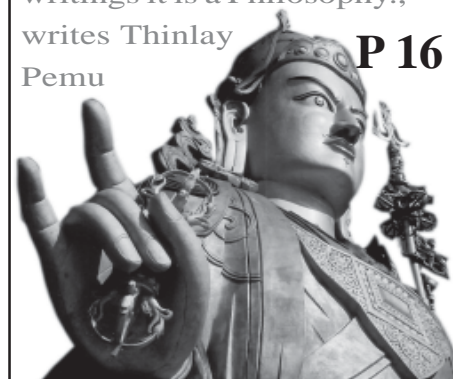
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The Americans said, “Change We Need” and voted Barack Obama into the White House... We said this fifteen months back and drove out a regime which lasted twenty-one years.... But here ends the similarity....

## “CHANGE WE NEED”.....

Barack Obama's victory in the just concluded American election was a spectacular one, to say the least. The election itself was a unique one with, first a women being pitted against a black man and then the black man against a maverick. That, now for the first time, a Black man will occupy the White House, in what is the oldest democracy in the world, is in itself an irony. More than Obama, the man himself, my opinion is that his election campaign was more responsible for the stunning defeat that he handed McCain and Republicans. Media and Political analysts speak of this American Election more as a defeat for President Bush and his policies rather than an endorsement of Obama and his Policies. “CHANGE WE NEED” was the main campaign slogan that the spin-doctors of “Team Obama” conjured up and it worked wonders – it more than just said that the Americans were fed up with President Bush and his half baked ideas and ill conceived policies – it also said that in an democracy, the common man was the actual king – it is the “*aam janta*” which decides who it wants as its leader. The American elections this year once again reaffirmed the

fact that however powerful, strong, charismatic or

smart any political leader may be, he will have his nose rubbed violently against the ground, if he rubbes the “*aam janta*” the wrong way.

This is precisely what happed here in the Darjeeling Hill too – the people after being rubbed the wrong way for twenty -one long years finally realized that they needed a change – the “Change we Need” swept in the new political outfit, GJMM, and in the process the once all powerful GNLF, which dominated every aspect of our lives, from Politics to Religion to Football to Culture to Business, faded into obscurity. With the GNLF in its heydays, the common man in the Hills perpetually had a feeling of being watched over – a feeling of suffocation and a certain amount of fear seemed omnipresent – A change was needed and the public wanted to break free and so when the GJMM come along promising change- everybody in the Hills jumped in to support the newly formed party.

A year and two months have passed since that day when the all green

**Barack Obama  
President Elect, USA**



# first time in north-east india and....its launching

**himalayan  
TIMESTV**

flag of the GNLF was so decisively uprooted from the Hills to be replaced by the Yellow, Green & White flag of the GJMM. But the time has now come to contemplate whether or not the “change” that was promised has actually materialized or whether in the name of change only the colours of the flag has changed. The change that one had asked for was better governance, better infrastructures, freedom from fear, solutions to our water & traffic problems, better opportunities for our youths, a corruption less society, no GT in the name of Party Funds – The ending of another calendar year forces us to ponder if the change we asked for has really come. It may be too early to make an assessment of the full facts – After all the new party has only been in the helm of affairs for a little more than just a year and probably still to come to terms with the sudden taste of power, but then the thinking process must start now and a very rough trail balance has to be made now to assess if we are in the right direction. Of course, one area where Mr. Bimal Gurung and the GJMM has been very successful and has passed with cent percent marks is that they have managed

to keep the agitation for a separate state a non-violent and a very peaceful one. Every single person living in the Darjeeling Hills wants a separate state – by whatever name it may be – several generations in the Hills have dreamt of it – but definitely our dream should not be at the cost of even a single human life. The GJMM has to be credited for keeping at bay, those violent instincts, that any agitation, any where in the world, has somewhere within itself. Coming back to the American elections, one has to really appreciate how civil the Yankees behaved after the election results were declared. Obama was extremely quite in thanking McCain and his team – McCain on his part was so gracious in defeat. There

The people after being rubbed the wrong way for twenty -One long years finally realized that they needed a change – the “Change we Need” swept in the new political outfit, GJMM, and in the process the once all powerful GNLF, which dominated every aspect of our lives, from Politics to Religion to Football to Culture to Business, faded into obscurity.

was no torching of houses, smashing of vehicles or banishments.

We may be the largest democracy in the world but seems it will take us many many ages before we catch up with the oldest democracy in the world.

This is the “Change we actually Need” -

Speaking of having a fractured Political class where Political rivalry is taken so literally that it inevitably ends up becoming a personal rivalry, one very absurd and shocking incident come to my mind instantly- R. Moktan, the highly informed author of “ Darjeeling-Sikkim Compendium of Documents” and the President of the Sikkim National Front, during the course of a TV interview, which incidentally I was conducting, said before a stunned audience that during the early 1970’s, a son in Darjeeling did not attend his fathers funeral just for the simple fact that they belonged to different Political parties. On the other hand, when Bikash Ghose, the late Mayor of the Siliguri

Municipal Corporation expired a few weeks back, political leaders from across the political spectrum paid homage to the departed soul.

While on the subject of Bikash Ghose, let me just point out one small fact- The late Mayor was a Bangladeshi by birth. He spent his initial years in Bangladesh and only in 1952 did he and his family cross over to India. Later in life he rose fast in the party hierarchy to become Siliguri’s “ First Person”. So is it not so hypocritical of them to call us “outsiders” despite we being in this part of the world since several generations??? The “Reds” sure need some lessons on history....

This is the “Change they actually Need”..... □

a..... a local english channel  
g from kalimpong







By Neelkamal Chhetri

# Colonial Laws, Darjeeling Tea & Step-Son Kalimpong

**T**oday as ideas fly about the justification of Gorkhaland. For some it is a question of identity. For others it is about socio-cultural issues. There have been papers made from an economic perspective. In the midst of all these, its time to look at all the colonial laws, which have surprisingly been continued till date. These colonial laws were created at the time when Darjeeling and its surrounding areas were being developed economically. Popular writings have focused on the development of Darjeeling hills as a hill station.

For the economic development of Kalimpong Sub-division, they chose a very different route. After six tea estates were developed, they decided that Kalimpong Sub-division would be an agricultural region. To ensure that this was complied, the lease agreement for the lands that were leased to the farming community carried this condition. This condition stated that only agricultural crops could be grown and tea crop could not be grown.

Rarely has this been looked at from an economic perspective.

For the rulers of Colonial British India, one of the key economic products was commodities. At the time India was a Colony of East India Company. When the company lost the monopoly of China's lucrative Tea Trade, it looked at their colony for alternate supply of Tea. Sometime later, tea was found to be growing wild in the forest of Assam. Around that time Darjeeling and later Dooars became a part of British India. In these areas

cultivation of tea was experimented. When it was found to be successful there was a mad scramble to clear the forests and to grow tea. The English being canny businessmen they leased out most of the land. While leasing out the land, they ensured that in Darjeeling, Terai and Dooars the only agricultural crop that could be grown was tea and this was put in the lease agreement signed. This was primarily done for revenue and profit maximization. Surprisingly this condition has continued today as can be seen from the West Bengal Land Lease agreement that the tea estate companies sign with the West Bengal Government.

For the economic development of Kalimpong Sub-division, they chose a very different route. After six tea estates were developed, they decided that Kalimpong Sub-division would be an agricultural region. To ensure that this was complied, the lease agreement for the lands that were leased to the farming community carried this condition. This condition stated that only agricultural crops could be grown and tea crop could not be grown.

Today in 2008, these conditions are still applicable. The West Bengal Land Reforms Act clearly states that other than agricultural crops no other commodity can be grown in Kalimpong sub-division.

If a small marginal farmer in Kalimpong sub-division wants to grow organic tea in part of his land or in that part which is wasteland, he cannot do so legally. Neither can he benefit that the benefits and subsidies that the Central Government is providing for the development of small tea growers.

Recently Shri Jairam Ramesh, Union Minister of State for Commerce inaugurated a Skill Development Center in Naxalbari for Small tea

Presently the small marginal farmers in Kalimpong Sub-Division are desperately looking for crop diversification to augment their earnings from farming. This has happened as they have realized the present mix of food crops they are growing isn't remunerative enough.

It is ironical that one of the most lucrative and high value commodity crop i.e. tea cannot be grown by these poor small marginal farmers. Neither will they be able to gain access and benefit from the knowledge and skills being developed in the UN funded project in Ambootia or the Central funded project in Naxalbari.

growers. This centre will provide skill development for small tea growers in growing tea commercially.

In another development United Nation's sister Organization- Community Fund For Commodity (CFC) in association with the Tea Board of India is funding a similar project in Ambootia Tea Estate. This project also meant for small organic tea growers.

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There is an urgent need to relook and rework these old colonial laws from a socio-economic perspective for the development of our agricultural and allied economies.

Further we need to realize and break away from the development paradigm of Contract based industry. This paradigm in the last twenty years has clearly shown that it does not lead to all round socio-economic development. Only a percentage of the population benefit from this kind of development paradigm. □

# The Gorkha Culture and GJMM's Project of *Daura Suruwal-Chawbandi Choli*

Vimal Khawas

Culture in general refers to patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that give such activities significance and importance. Cultures are unwritten systems of symbols and meanings that lack fixed boundaries, that are constantly in flux and that interact and compete with one another. Culture is generally defined as the ways of life including arts, beliefs and institutions of a population that is passed down from generation to generation. It is the way of life for an entire society. Culture evolves, modifies and fades gradually over a period of time. Cultural regeneration or degeneration of a particular community or a social group, therefore, cannot be imposed by force. It happens with time.

In the context of above theoretical note, it is worth recalling and debating the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha's (GJMM), demand for every residents of Darjeeling hills to wear '*Daura Suruwal and Choubandi Choli*' from 7th of October to 7th of November 2008 as part of its movement for a separate state of Gorkhaland. The call basically aims to mark the 'Cultural Revolution' in the Hills and to offer to visitors and tourists the ethnicity of the people of the Darjeeling Hills. Such a move of GJMM has met with stern criticism from a large number of liberal people including the academics, politicians, journalists, and general populace both within and outside the Darjeeling hills.

Darjeeling is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual region. It accommodates within its geographical boundary heterogeneous social groups with diverse history, society, culture and tradition. Under such a dynamic situation, autochthonous group like the Lepchas felt/feel offended by such a move as they have their own traditional history and culture. Similarly, other





social groups like the Bhutias, Marwaris, Biharis and Bengalis residing in and around the Darjeeling hills were/are not either happy with such a move. More satirically, even within the larger Nepali speaking community, groups were/are divided for and against the wearing of *Daura Suruwal-Chaubandi Choli*. In this regard, Tamang was the first community to announce that it would not accept Gorkha Janmukti Morcha's diktat on the ground of its own history, culture and tradition. Recently, an article was also published from Nepal that declared *Daura Suruwal-Chaubandi Choli* as a dress that originated from the royal Shah family of Nepal who had migrated from Rajasthan as refugees. According to it, 'the Shah dynasty had taken refuge in Nepal in the year 1495 from Rajasthan followed by the Rana dynasty in 1559. The Rajasthani dress of '*Daura Shuwrul-Chaubandi Choli*' also entered

Nepal through these two dynasties'. In fact, much before the above mentioned article was published, a noted professor, Dr. Tara Nath Sharma, of Tribhuvan University had argued that *daura-suruwal* pair comes from the Rajasthani tradition of regional costume. Further, there are numerous accounts about Dhaka (Topi) being initially brought from Bangladesh by the Rana rulers.

In this connection, if we delve deep inside and attempt to dissect the Nepali speakers of Darjeeling hills, they consist of several social groups with their own traditional cultures and subcultures including their dresses, food habits, festivals etc. Hence, Bahun, Chettri, Newar, Tamang, Gurung, Rai, Limbu,

Mangar, Kami, Damai, Sarki etc have their own culture and are different from each other. The term Nepali/



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Gorkha itself is a generic term. It does not connote a particular community or a social group but a host of groups each with different historical, geographical and socio-cultural background. However, over a period of time these groups have gradually been distancing themselves from their indigenous culture for a new Gorkha culture. It is also that the Gorkha culture is not only an amalgamation of different cultures of the mainstream Nepali speaking groups but it also borrows heavily from other closely related communities like the Lepchas and Bhutias. Further, Darjeeling Gorkha culture is largely influenced by the cultures of groups like Marwari, Bihari, and Bengali that live in and around Darjeeling hills. Gorkha culture is therefore a mixture of several cultures and hence is highly dynamic in nature. It is still evolving and relatively fragile in character.

Given the dynamism and tenderness of Darjeeling Gorkha culture, the dictation of GJMM to the Darjeelingees to compulsorily dress in *Daura Suruwal-Chaubandi Choli* appears to be highly unscientific that straightaway goes against the nature of contemporary society of the region. Further, smearing of black paint on the faces of individuals defying the dress code imposed by GJMM further makes things debatable. No likeminded individual supports anything undemocratic like this. It is more condemnable when persons holding public positions are involved in such activities. The so called 'dress codes' should be purely voluntary. Each and every Darjeelingees are born in a free society and they have their constitutional right to decide upon what to and what not to wear. GJMM along with its leaders and cadres should be very clear of the fact that defying its 'dress code' and supporting the movement of Gorkhaland are two vastly different aspects. □

\*The writer is Associate Fellow, Sikkim University, Gangtok

# Knowing NORGAY

## Tenzing Sherpa- Darjeelings favourite son

**T**enzing Norgay was a Nepalese Sherpa mountaineer. Tenzing Norgay created history on May 29, 1953, when he and Sir Edmund Hillary became the first men to conquer Mount Everest.

Tenzing Norgay was born in Tshechu, presently in Tibet Autonomous Region, China. He grew up in peasant family in Khumbu in Nepal. His exact date of birth is not known but it is believed that he was born in late May and later on he decided to celebrate May 29 as his birthday, as this was the date he climbed Everest. Tenzing Norgay's original name was Namgyal Wangdi,

but as a child his name was changed on the advice of a Lama. Norgay means fortunate. Tenzing Norgay ran away to Kathmandu twice as a boy, and eventually settled in the Sherpa community in Toong Soong Busty in Darjeeling, West Bengal, India.

Tenzing Norgay took part as a high-altitude porter in three official British attempts to climb Everest from the northern Tibetan side



in the 1930s. He also took part in other climbs in various parts of the Indian subcontinent. He scaled Nanda Devi, which he described as the most difficult climb he ever took. In 1947, he took part in an unsuccessful Everest attempt. The attempt ended when a strong storm at 22,000 feet pounded them.

In 1952, Tenzing Norgay took part in two Swiss expeditions led by Raymond Lambert, the first serious attempt to climb Everest from the southern Nepalese side, during which he and Lambert reached the then record height of 8,599 m (28,215 ft).

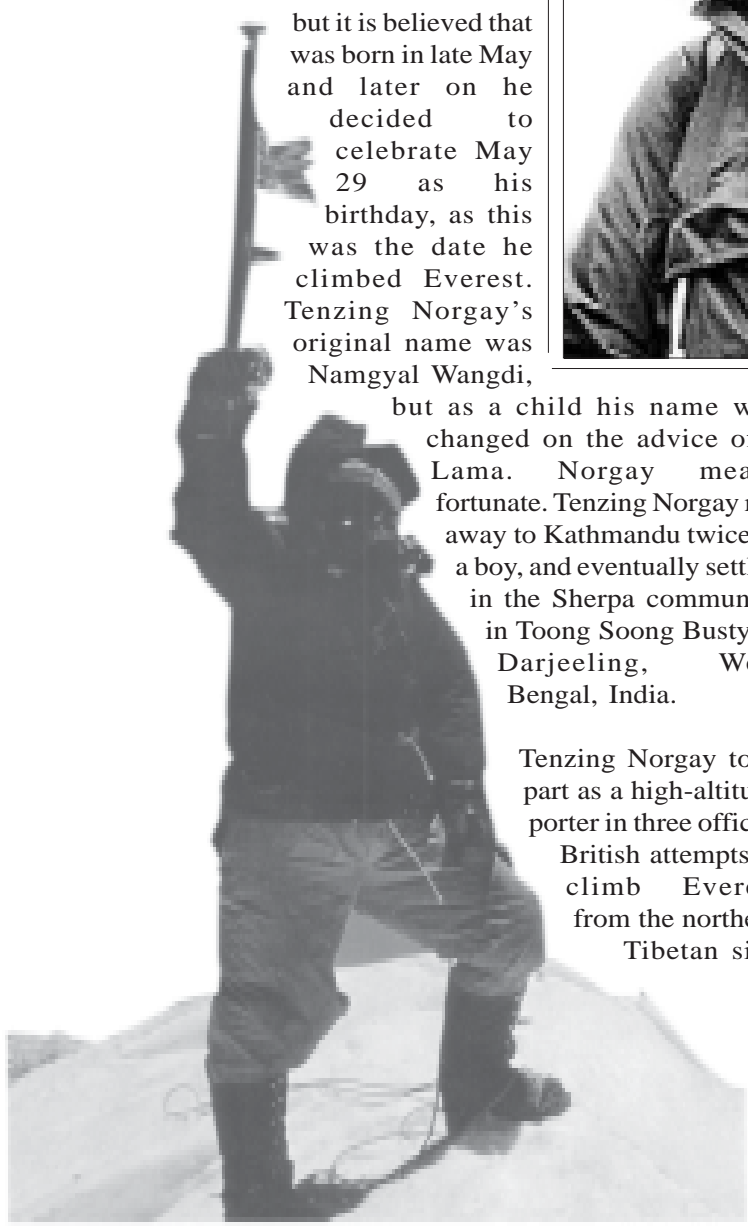
In 1953, Tenzing Norgay took part in Sir John Hunt's expedition. This was his seventh expedition to Everest. During this expedition he and

Sir Edmund Hillary became the first men to reach the summit.

Conquering of Everest brought great adulation to Tenzing Norgay in India and Nepal. He was even worshipped by some people who believed him to be an incarnation of Buddha or Lord Shiva. Tenzing Norgay later became Director of field training for the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute in Darjeeling. In 1978, he founded a company, Tenzing Norgay Adventures that offers trekking in the Himalayas.

Tenzing Norgay married thrice. His first wife, Dawa Phuti, died young in 1944. He had two daughter from his first marriage. His second wife was Ang Lahmu, a cousin of his first wife. They had no children. Tenzing Norgay had his third marriage while his second wife was still alive, as allowed by Sherpa custom. He had a son named Jamling from this marriage. Jamling Norgay presently looks after the adventure company founded by his father.

Tenzing Norgay died on May 9, 1986 in Darjeeling, West Bengal.



# HISTORY OF DARJEELING - A JUGGLING ACT

By Sandip C. Jain

Second in the series on the history of the Darjeeling Hills, this article gives the readers of Himalayan Times a brief yet very interesting account on the history of Kalimpong Sub-Division. Kalimpong though a part of the Dist of Darjeeling has a completely different history than Darjeeling or Kurseong. An attempt is being made here under to present the readers of HT, for the first time, an in-depth history of Kalimpong.

## KALIMPONG

One of the earliest reference to Kalimpong that can be found in any historical document is in the book "Bhotan and the Story of the Dooar was" which was written by Surgeon D.L. Rennie in 1864. He writes describing it as "a hamlet called Kalimpong". He goes on to describe it as "a few huts constituting the hamlet of Kalimpong." He further writes "the mountain slopes about Kalimpong is partially cleared, and a few plantain trees were growing near the huts." He also mentions that there were eight cows in this hamlet.



The present day area of the sub-division of Kalimpong with an area of 401 square, was historically a part of the Sikkim empire. In the year 1700, the Maharaja of Sikkim, Tensung Namgye (born 1644), died leaving behind three wives and four children. The first wife a Tibetan called Nyem-bi-enmo, bore him a daughter named Pende Amo, the second wife was from a family near Tinki-jong to the North West of Sikkim and was named Desa-Sam-Serpa. He second wife bore him a son Chakdor Namgye (the future king). The third wife was a local Limbu Princess who had two children. On his death in 1700, a tussle broke out within the family as to who should be proclaimed the new ruler of Sikkim- Pende Amo, the eldest child of the family staked claim to the throne but Chakdor Namgye, the oldest son of the king, though from his second wife, was crowned the king at the tender age of fourteen. This angered the daughter who facilitated an invasion of Sikkim by the Bhutanese Army. The child king fled Sikkim and entered Tibet where he stayed for a couple of years. On maturing in age and managing to raise a small army he re-entered Sikkim and succeeded in pushing the Bhutanese out of a portion of his empire. The Bhutanese withdrew from that area of Sikkim which was on the right bank of the River Teesta though they still maintained their presence and positions in the area on the left bank of River Teesta. The area from which the Bhutanese withdrew is roughly the area of present day Sikkim and the area on which they continued their presence is roughly the area of present day Kalimpong.

The exact dates of the Bhutanese occupation and their partial withdrawal is still not too clear with scholars differing on the

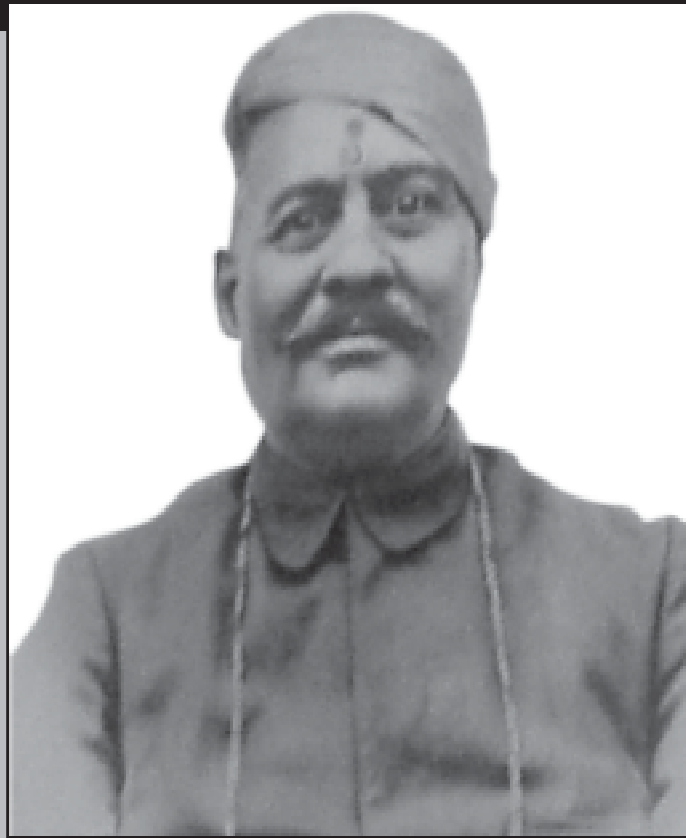
exact year. But it is definitely between 1700 to 1710. Hence the present day area of Kalimpong came under the Bhutanese. But it believed that although, technically the area was under Bhutan, the local Lepcha chieftains actually held sway over the area. The Bhutanese put the present day area of Kalimpong under the administration of the fort of Damsong, which was under the control of the Zongpen of Dalim fort. Kalimpong contained to be under the Bhutanese empire for the next 160 years till 1865, after which the British annexed it into the British Empire along with the "athara duars", after the

Anglo-Bhutan War and the Treaty of Sinchula. It was only following the annexation by the British that Kalimpong set into the tracks of development.

Initially after the annexation, Kalimpong was put under the Deputy Commissioner of Western Duars District but on year later in 1866 it was transferred to the district of Darjeeling. Kalimpong was administered under the Sadar Sub-Division (Darjeeling Sub-Division) with a manager of "Khas Mahals" working under the Deputy Commissioner. Police work was controlled by an Inspector. In 1916, the Kalimpong sub division was created to further speed up its development. With the coming of the Scottish missionaries to Kalimpong the town set forth towards development.

The first school in Kalimpong, SUMI, was established in 1887, the Macfarlane Church opened in 1892, the Charteris Hospital was started in 1893 for the benefit of the locals. In 1891, the Kalimpong Agriculture & Horticulture mela was started which attracted and boosted trading in the town. The first Cinchona Plantation in the Kalimpong areas was started in Munsong in 1900 and the one at Rangoo was started in 1938. To cater to the needs of the new town the Kalimpong municipality was established on the 1st of July 1945.

Kalimpong gained much of its prominence due to its geographical location, which made it a hub for the Trade with Tibet. After the trading with Tibet was closed following the Indo- China War of 1961, Kalimpong lost much of its charm and prominence in the trading circles.□



## **Rai Bahadur R. C. Mintri**

Dr. D. C. Roy

**R**.C.Mintri Road is one of the popular business centers in Kalimpong. It is also known as Lower 10th Mile Road. Both sides of the road are heavily packed with the many shops and showrooms. The road in the south starts from the Daruwa Dara junction (commonly known as C.K. Chowk) where the Relly road starts and both D.S. Gurung road and Ongden road terminate; on the other end in the north it meets with D.B.Giri Path (earlier Rishi Road) near the old Fire Station. This lower 10th mile road was renamed as R.C.Mintri Road in 1967 after Rai Bahadur Ram Chandra Mintri by the Municipality when his son Onkarmal Mintri was the Vice-Chairman and Madan Kumar Pradhan was the Chairman of the Kalimpong Municipality. The shops on both sides of the road were the main centre of business during the Tibetan trade before 1962. Even today Tibetan articles are available on both sides of this road. Some old businessmen on this road are fluent in Tibetan language and can still remember the convoy of mules and busy business days when the Tibetans used to visit Kalimpong with wool and purchase different consumables like salt, rice, radio, bi-cycle, watch etc. from here. It is just incidental that the business communities on this road are mostly Marwari and the name of the road is also after a Marwari personality. But the pertinent question is : who was R.C.Mintri? What was his contribution and field of action which compelled the Municipality to give him honour by naming the road after him? On enquiry it is experienced that none on both sides of the road could give suitable answer detailing about the personality and his areas of activity in Kalimpong. The present write-up is an attempt to know about the personality and his area of action in and around Kalimpong.

Ram Chandra Mintri hailed from Tara Nagar earlier Reni Tehsil of Churu district (Nizamat) of Bikaner state of Rajputana region. Bikaner during those periods was independent state ruled by the Rajput Maharajas.

Lakshman Das Mintri, father of Ram Chandra Mintri, came to Darjeeling around 1850. For about 3 – 4 years he was in service at his relative's shop. Soon after his younger brother Puruk Chand also came to Darjeeling and started his independent business. Lakshman Das then took leave and left for his home town. Initially Puruk Chand commenced his business dealing in a variety of commodities and subsequently established himself at the 'B' building of Darjeeling Municipality under the firm's joint name of Lakshman Das Puruk Chand. His was only the third establishment at Darjeeling owned by a Marwari.

In 1866 when Kalimpong was annexed to India by the British, Puruk Chand left no time in coming to Kalimpong and was one of the first few Marwaris to start a business here. He continued his business simultaneously at Kalimpong and Darjeeling.

Soon after Puruk Chand's son Lakshmi Chand and Lakshman Das's son Ram Chandra joined their family business. After the early death of Puruk Chand, his son Lakshmi Das and nephew Ram Chandra shouldered the entire responsibility of the business which mainly centered at Kalimpong and partly at Darjeeling. At that time the present Mintri wooden building was meant for residential purposes and was known as 'Kath Kothi'. Mohan Kumar Mintri, grand son of Ram Chandra Mintri still is carrying out his transport business under the banner Mintri Transport (P) limited from Kath Kothi. Anyway, initially their main shop was located at the site where the present

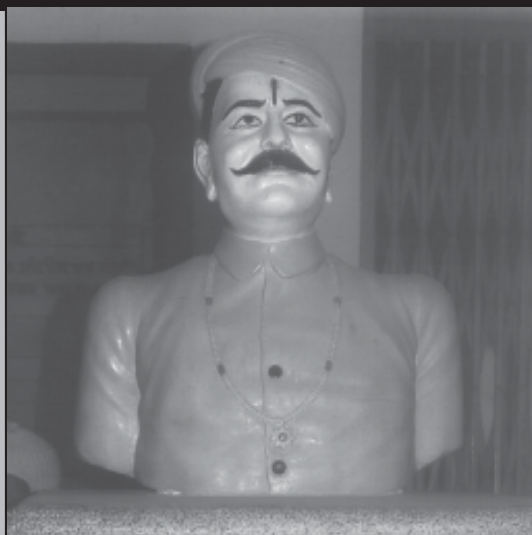


'Mintri Bhawan' stands. The shop was destroyed by fire in 1908. The present building of 'Mintri Bhawan' was constructed in 1910 and was presumably the first RCC building not only in Kalimpong but in the district. It may be noted that RCC type of construction was invented around 1908 and took time to come in India and hence 'Mintri Bhawan' may be in the league of the oldest RCC buildings in a wider area. At present Deepak Kumar Mintri, the grand son of Kaluram Mintri is running his online share market business in this building.

The Mintri family were basically cloth merchants. They were the leading wholesalers and retailers of cloth both in Kalimpong and Darjeeling. But later on they expanded their business in other sectors also. Their banking business was very promising one and within very short period of time it became the leading bank in Kalimpong region. Originally the bank was named as 'Lakshman Das -- Purak Chand Bank' but after their family separation in 1935 there were two banks: 'Purak Chand -- Lakshmi Chand Bank' and 'Lakshman Das -- Ram Chandra Bank'. Both Lakshmi Chand and Ram Chandra separately in the name of their father continued to run their independent banking business. Lakshmi Chand was a peace-loving and religious minded person and lost interest in business after the premature death of one of his sons and also his son-in-law. The present Thakur Bari was constructed on the land and money donated by the joint family. Kaluram, the third son of Lakshmi Chand was a much respected and widely popular business figure in Kalimpong. His name was proposed for Rai Bahadur title but by that time India became independent and that part of the chapter was closed. The road connecting Upper Cart road with Main road at 9th mile through Kalimpong Government High School was proposed to be named after Kaluram Mintri by the Municipality but subsequently did not materialize.

Around 1906 British established three military centers in Tibet—Yatung, Phari Zong and Gyantse. The Mintri family opened shops at all the three places and catered to the need of military supply till 1954. These three shops were the first Indian shops in Tibet. The Mintri family was basically working as carrier of military provisions. They received articles at Kalimpong from the government and made them available to the British and subsequently Indian military posted at Tibet through their transport and mules. A mule could carry two mounds (one mound = 37 kg) of weight at a time by balancing one mound on each side of its body. After family separation this military supply was taken over by Lakshmi Chand.

Ram Chandra was a very mobile and energetic young person



Bust of R.C.Mintri outside the hospital in Taranagar which helped establish

**The Mintri family were basically cloth merchants. They were leading wholesalers and retailers of cloth both in Kalimpong and Darjeeling. They later expanded their business in other sectors as well.**

who continued his frequent visit to Tibet in connection to business which he ran under the banner 'Lakshman Das -- Ram Chandra'. To help his business, Ram Chandra adopted Bal Chand, son of his younger brother, Hiralal Mintri. Sanjay Mintri, owner of present 'Kalash' is the grand son of Bal Chand Mintri. Ram Chandra was a dynamic and liberal person who could bring his wife up to Gail Khola by railway and then to Kalimpong by 'Palki'. She was the first Marwari lady to reach Kalimpong in 1904/05.

Ram Chandra Mintri was not only a successful business person of Kalimpong but he was a great donor of his time. During the initial phase of establishment of St. Andrew's Colonial Home (present day Dr Graham's Home), Dr J.A.Graham, the founder of the Home collected funds from different sources for construction of his Home for Anglo-Indian children. J.R.Minto in his book Graham of Kalimpong mentioned the contribution made by R.C.Mintri in materializing Graham's dream of constructing the school in Kalimpong. Minto wrote "one of the local merchants, Ram Chandra Mintri, Rai Sahib, who had been greatly assisted by Graham in his business, gifted a very valuable water supply to the Homes" (J.R.Minto 1974; P-80). Rev.D.G.Manuel in his book A Gladdening River gave a detail of the gift by R.C.Mintri in different fields associated with the Christian Missionary work at Kalimpong during the first half of the last century. After contents of the book, Rev. Manuel wrote three pages on Illustrations under the sub-title "Indian helpers, etc. (1) Dalai Lama's House, (2) Rajah Ugyen Dorji, (3) Rajah's Sister, (4) Rai Bahadur Ramchandra Mintri (5) Hostel

gifted by Ramchandra Mintri." It may be mentioned that Rev. Manuel in his book mentioned five times the name of R.C.Mintri (Page—xxiii, 148, 181, 183 and 211). A review of the book reveals that R.C Mintri donated in a number of occasions for the development works of the growing town. Mintri's donation for the construction of dispensary at the market, water supply for St Andrew's Home, weaving school at Mission compound was well recognized. After mentioning the gift of Rajah Ugyen Dorji, the King of Bhutan Rev Manuel wrote :

"Still more striking have been the gifts of Rai Bahadur Ramchandra Mintri, a successful Kalimpong merchant and devoted Hindu. Early in the history of the Guild Mission he gifted a Bazaar Dispensary, costing 2500 rupees. Shortly after the Lace Industry had been started, he built a school at a cost of 9000 rupees. To the weaving school and the new Hostel just erected for boys at work in connection with the Industries, he has given a sum of not less than 10,000 rupees, and for a water supply for the St. Andrew's Colonial Homes a sum of not less than 9000 rupees." (Rev.D.G.Manuel —A Gladdening River, 1914 ;page- 148).

Giftng a sum of more than thirty thousand rupees during those days is not a matter of joke for any individual. This shows dedication and broad mindness of Ram Chandra Mintri. Even today one



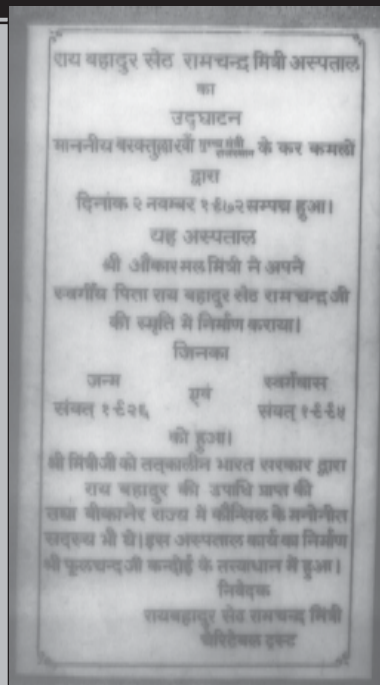
can notice the marble stone in front of the old building at Maha Rani Chowk (present day Damber Chowk) which was meant for dispensary for which 2500 rupees was spent by Ram Chandra Mintri. The engraved writings on the marble stone are self explanatory and it reads like:

The Coronation Dispensary  
Built by  
Babu Ram Chandra Mintri  
Kalimpong  
In Commemoration of  
The Coronation  
Of  
King Edward VII  
And  
Queen Alexandra  
9th Aug 1902

This indicates Ram Chandra's closeness with the British Sahebs. The gift was well recognized and was a great help to the society. Rev Manuel mentioned about the gift and the construction work as beneficial to the society. He wrote: "On the 1st of January a new Dispensary, the gift of Rai Bahadur Ram Chandra Mintri, the Hindu merchant who has done much to help the Mission, was opened in the Bazaar" (Rev.D.G.Manuel, 1914; page- 181). The success of the dispensary and its recognition can be found in the note of Lieut. - Governor of Bengal who in November 1904 after inspecting the Hospital and Dispensary wrote in the visitors book : "This Hospital and the Dispensary in the Bazaar are doing splendid work. No more clear mark of the confidence of the public could be given than the construction of the Coronation Dispensary by Babu Ram Chandra Mintri. At least one mark of public confidence is greater, viz. the attendance." (Rev D.G.Manuel, 1914 : Page-183).

During their rule, British had the practice of awarding some titles to those Indians who contributed substantially for the welfare of the society by their individual contribution and involvement. Ram Chandra Mintri had established good relation with the Sahebs at the local level like Dr Grahams and others and also contributed for the development of the society. As a result Ram Chandra Mintri was awarded with the title 'Rai Saheb' or 'Rai Bahadur'. Such title was a sort of honour and respect as a mark of recognition and reward for outstanding contribution of any individual towards the welfare of the society.

One can well recognize the services of the Mintri family in the development of modern Kalimpong. They are the pioneers and took challenging tasks in introducing modern services to the people of the town. During the Tibetan trade, they remained the main trading agents of Kalimpong and later they shifted their business to transport, communication and money investment. They are the forerunners in the fields of introducing jeep, truck, bus in Kalimpong; connecting the town with Siliguri and the rest of the country by road and air; petrol pump facilities, fertilizer facilities; modern communication facilities like PCO, Fax, lamination, automatic xerox; on line investment facilities etc. At present the



The Coronation  
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Of  
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And  
Queen Alexandra  
9th Aug 1902

All photos courtesy: Mr. Sanjay Mintri

Mintri family has three individual separate business establishments: one run by Mohan Kumar Mintri, the grand son of R.C.Mintri; the other jointly by Ratan Kumar Mintri and Gobind Prasad Mintri, the great grand sons of Puruk Chand Mintri and the third one by Sanjay Mintri, the grand son of Bal Chand Mintri.

Rai Bahadur Ram Chandra Mintri started his business career at Kalimpong with great success and honour and those were the golden days in his life. Unfortunately later in life fate turned against him and the authorities noticed him walking on the wrong side of law. He was called from Gyantse in Tibet to explain his position. But with Dr. Graham's counsel Rai Saheb preferred to head straight for Shimla with an appeal before the Viceroy who was holidaying there. To the appellant's great satisfaction, the case against him was ordered to be dismissed. But Lady Luck's stay in his company was coming to an end and in no time he lost his wealth and properties. He even sold 'Kath Kothi', the residential house to a Calcutta based business man from whom the house was later repurchased by his son Onkarmal Mintri who started his business at Kalimpong with little resources. Initially Onkarmal worked as carrier for the Kalimpong ropeway and used to drive his jeep between Kalimpong and Siliguri at the fare of Rs. Five per person. He was a driver par excellence and drove the car of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India when he visited Kalimpong from Sikkim in 1952. Onkarmal not only became a successful business person like his father but also had the donor heart of his father and donated one classroom for Kumudini

Homes School. Anyway, Rai Bahadur Ram Chandra Mintri was a man of dignity and could never come back to Kalimpong after liquidation of his property. He died at his home town at Tara Nagar, Churu, Rajasthan. The people of Kalimpong will remember him long for his outstanding contribution as one of the pioneers and founders of modern Kalimpong.

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2. Minto, J.R. -- Graham of Kalimpong. William Blackwood .Edinburgh. 1974.

Acknowledgements:

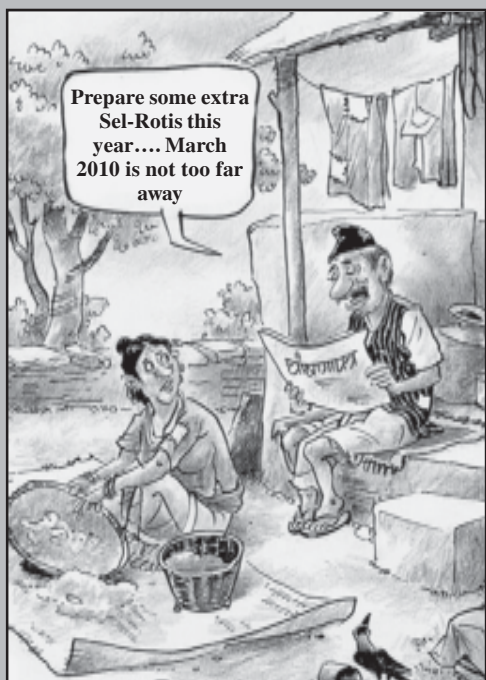
1. Shri Ratan Kumar Mintri -- Mintri Bhawan, Main Road, Kalimpong, Darjeeling.
2. Shri Gobind Prasad Mintri -- Mintri Bhawan, Main Road, Kalimpong, Darjeeling.
3. Shri Sanjay Mintri -- Kalash, Main Road, Kalimpong, Darjeeling,
4. Shri Deepak Kumar Mintri --Mintri Bhawan, Main Road, Kalimpong, Darjeeling.
5. Shri Mohan Mintri -- Mintri Transport, Kath Kothi, Main Road, Kalimpong, Darjeeling.

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## Did you know.....



**That eleven species of venomous snakes: four of them Kraits, Two Cobras, One Coral Snake and Four Vipers can be found in the Darjeeling District??????????**



**That the Darjeeling District was once a part of the present day Bangladesh having been under the Rajshahi Division???????????**



**That the first commercial Tea Plantation in the Darjeeling Hills in Aloo-Bari & Lebong in 1856??????????**



**That the first Teak Plantation in the Darjeeling District was laid out in 1808 at Bamanpokhri (Near Pankhabari)??????????**



**That the first Cinchona plantation was started at Mungpoo in 1866???????????**



**That the Kalimpong Industrial School was started in the year 1897 by Mrs. Catherine Graham??????????**



**That the State Bank of India first opened up for business in Kalimpong on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1962??????????????????**



**That the first Suspension Bridge constructed across the Teesta River was in the year 1865???????????**



**That the Kalimpong Ropeway was opened in September 1930 and that it was designed by the British Ropeway Engineering Co. Ltd???????????????**



Thinlay Pemu

# MY EXPERIENCE WITH TRUTH.... BUDDHISM IN A NUT-SHELL

Religion is now a much maligned word – Fanatics have given religion a bad name-not because any religion is lesser to another but because fanning the fumes of hatred in the name of religion has become a strategy for survival for a few. Whether it be Hinduism, Christianity, Islam or Buddhism, all preach peace, brotherhood & love and Buddhism, on which I write here, is no different.

I write this piece, not with the intent of professing what Buddhism is, but as what it means to me and how Lord Buddha's teachings are relevant in today's context.

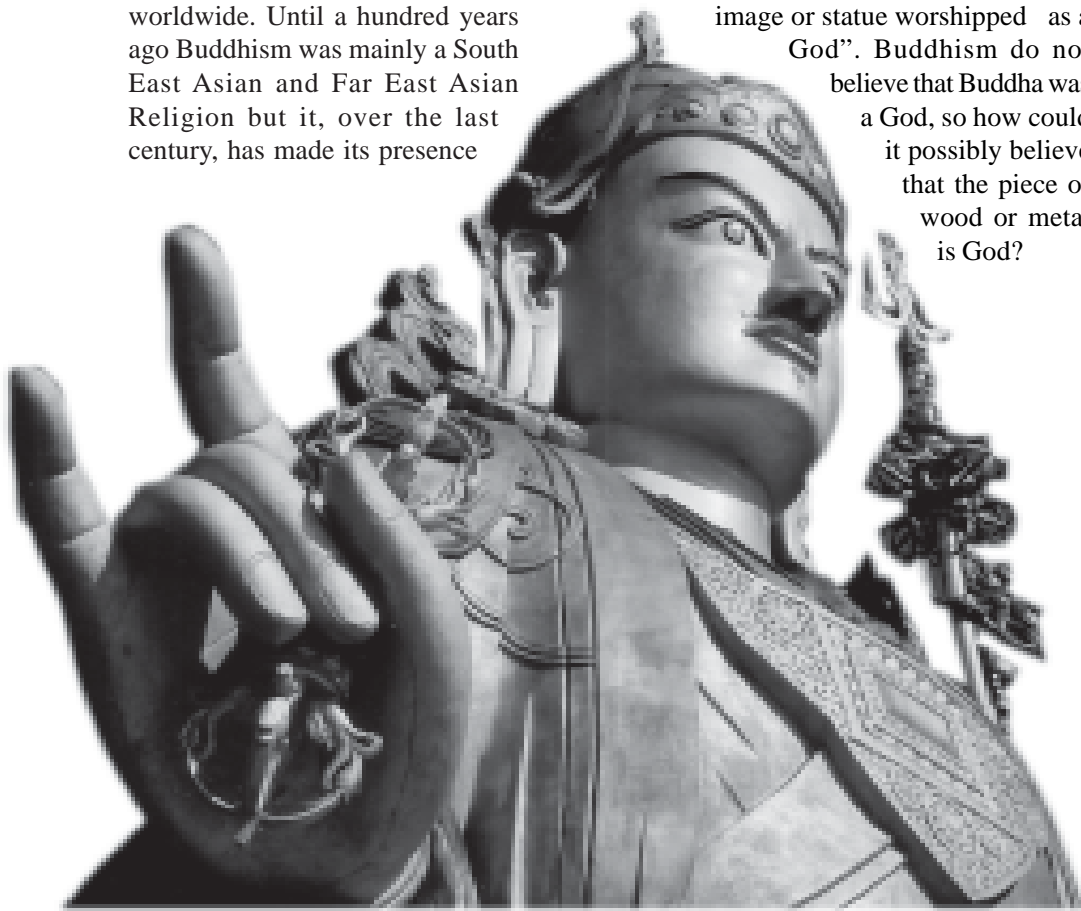
Buddhism is about 2,500 years old and has about 300 million followers worldwide. Until a hundred years ago Buddhism was mainly a South East Asian and Far East Asian Religion but it, over the last century, has made its presence

felt in several many European and American countries. To say that it is a "Religion" would probably be a wrong concept as in accordance to the various writings it is a Philosophy. The word Philosophy comes from two words 'Philo' which means 'Love' and 'Sophia' means 'Wisdom'.

In our daily lives we worship God. Every individual has his/her own way of practicing his/her religion and worshipping God. Buddhism believes in Karma and Dharma. It professes that if you do good, the good will come back to you. There are different type of worship. When someone worships a God, he/she praises and honours him or her, makes offerings and ask for favours believing that God will hear their praise, receive their offerings and answer their prayers. Buddhist do not indulge in this kind of worship. Yes, Buddhists too worship Buddha in the Idol form- but here again there is a difference – The dictionary defines an idols as – "an image or statue worshipped as a God". Buddhism do not believe that Buddha was a God, so how could it possibly believe that the piece of wood or metal is God?

All religions use symbols to express various concepts. In Taoism, the Ying-Yang is used to symbolise the harmony between opposites. In Sikhism, the sword is used to symbolise spiritual struggle. In Christianity, the fish is used to symbolise Christ's presence and the Cross is used to symbolise his Sacrifice. And in Buddhism, the statue of Buddha is used to symbolise human perfection. The statue of the Buddha also reminds us of the human dimension in Buddhist teachings, the fact is that Buddhism is man centered not God centered and we must look within ourselves to find perfection and misunderstanding. So, to say Buddhist worship God is not correct.

There are several many Buddhist countries, which are "Poor" but "Poor" in which sense??? If by poor, one means a poor quality of life then these very countries which are termed as Poor are actually very rich for they have a very rich quality of Life. America, for example, is an economically rich and powerful country but the crime rate is one of the highest in the world, millions of old people are neglected by their children and die alone in old age homes, domestic violence and child abuse are major problems. One in three marriages end in divorce, pornography is easily available. Rich in terms of money but perhaps poor in terms of quality of life. Now, take Burma, a country that is economically backward but here parents are honoured and respected by their children, the crime rate is relatively low, divorce and suicide are almost unheard of as are domestic violence and child abuse, pornography and sexual malpractices are almost nonexistent. Economically

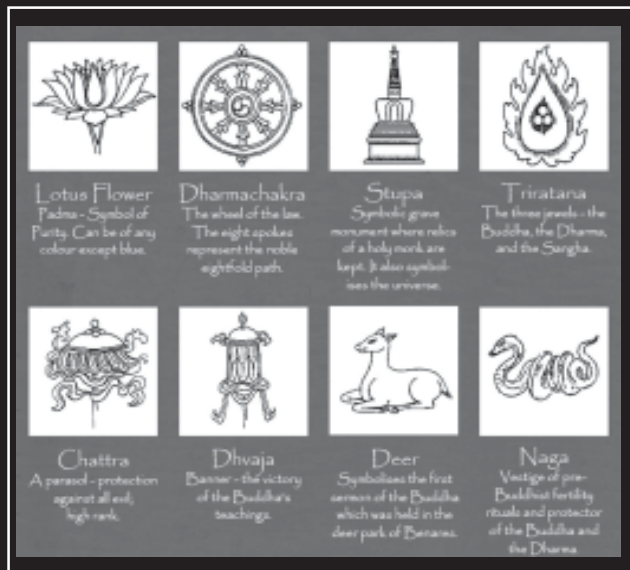




backward, but perhaps a higher quality of life than in countries like America. But, even if we judge Buddhist countries in terms of economics alone, one of the wealthiest and most economically dynamic countries in the world today is Japan where 93% of the population follows Buddhism.

Another important aspect of Buddhism is that Buddhists do not feel the need to boast of the good they do. Several years ago the Japanese Buddhist Leader Nikkhu Nirwano received the Templeton Prize for his work in promoting inter-religion harmony. Likewise a Thai Buddhist monk was recently awarded the prestigious Magsaysay Prize for his excellent work among drug addicts. In 1987 another Thai monk, Ven Kantayapiwat was awarded the Norwegian children Peace Prize for his many years of work helping homeless children in rural areas.

And what about the large scale social work being done among the poor in India by Western Buddhist orders.? They have built school, child m e n d i n g - c e n t e r s , dispensaries and small scale industries for self-sufficiency. Buddhists see help given to others as an expression of their religious practice just as other religious do but they believe that it should be done quietly and without self-promotion. Thus you don't hear so much about their charitable works.



Over the years Buddhism has manifested itself in several forms. There is Theravada Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, Pure land Buddhism, Yogacare Buddhism and Vajrayana Buddhism but they all believe in the core teachings of Lord Buddha. It has been reinterpreted over the centuries so that it can remain relevant to each new generation. Outwardly, the types of Buddhism may seem very different but at the centre of all of them is the four Noble Truth and Eight Fold Path.

**As Buddha said:** Life is certain but death is also certain. While one lives he/she suffer the separation that comes with the death of a loved one. And so, till one survive one can try to be good, do good and contribute in other people's happiness. Happiness is always so fragile and it can be replaced by sorrow and discontent in a flash. But this is Life. Life itself, because it ends in death, it is a tragedy. Someone once said "life is like an Onion, you peel it crying". According to Buddha birth is suffering because it leads inevitably to death and decay. One should understand this well. If one accepts life, he/she must accept death too.

A successful life is not about dying. It is about living well; I have known two year olds and nine-years old who have changed people and even entire communities by their ability to love. On the other hand, I have known many who lived much longer and left behind nothing but emptiness. And remember Lord Buddha's last words were- " All conditioned things are subject to dissolution." □

## RELATION

Thinlay Pemu

**You will come in my Life,  
I never thought so....**

**You will show me a different way,  
I never imagined so....**

**You will teach me the meaning of love,  
I never visualized so.....**

**You will be my Inspiration,  
I never dreamt so....**

**You would value my Love  
and treasure my feelings,  
I never felt so.....**

**Then “You will turn away”,  
I never anticipated so....**

**You will leave me Speechless,  
I never believed so.**

**If Relationship is this,  
Then I would have never loved so....**

## HOPE.....

Annie Lee

**Leaving everything behind.....  
i walk towards the only blur of light i**

**see,**

**don't know where i'm goin,  
don't know where i'm heading.**

**Staring across the sky.....**

**i see my star, shining down on me,  
that's the only ray of hope that leads  
me..**

**Deep in the night .....**

**i realize that my star has disappeared,  
where did it go, where will i find...  
i panic and i stumble....darkness**

**everywhere,**

**that's when i feel a touch, a feeling of  
being whole...**

**i turn around and see u there,  
and that's when I know....**

**my shining star has come to make me go  
on.....**



Example: R A I N BOW CLOUD FOREST

Each answer pairs up with the three words to form a trio of familiar phrases. Complete the puzzle and believe that you are a wizard with words. Answers too are given below, if you think you cannot complete it.

- 1 

		E	
--	--	---	--

 DEEP JERK CAP
- 2 

	N					
--	---	--	--	--	--	--

 BONE DUSTER UNDER
- 3 

		R	
--	--	---	--

 NOSED CORE LUCK
- 4 

	U					
--	---	--	--	--	--	--

 FAMILY WASTE WINTER
- 5 

		A		
--	--	---	--	--

 BACK FLOOD CARD
- 6 

				T
--	--	--	--	---

 TOWN WRITER SHIP
- 7 

	A			
--	---	--	--	--

 CLIP MONEY MOON
- 8 

				P	
--	--	--	--	---	--

 ARTIST HATCH CLAUSE

ANSWERS: 1. KNEE 2. KNUCKLE 3. HARD 4. NUCLEAR 5. FLASH 6. GHOST 7. PAPER 8. ESCAPE

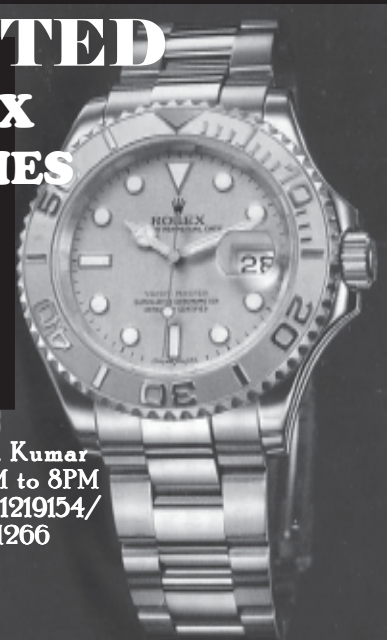
## Future of kalimpong

Dichen Dolma Bhutia  
17 August 2005



*If you want your child's photograph to feature in this column of **HIMALAYAN TIMES**, all you have to do is to send us a recent photograph of your child along with the Date of Birth.*

## WANTED ROLEX WATCHES



Contact: Mr. Kumar  
between 8AM to 8PM  
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09334911266

All makes of Rolex, Omega, Cartier, Jaegre, Moonface models, Movado, Universal, Pocket-watches in Gold, Mont Blanc Pens, Old Diamond Jewelleries and English Silver Items (Old/ New, Working/Non-Working).

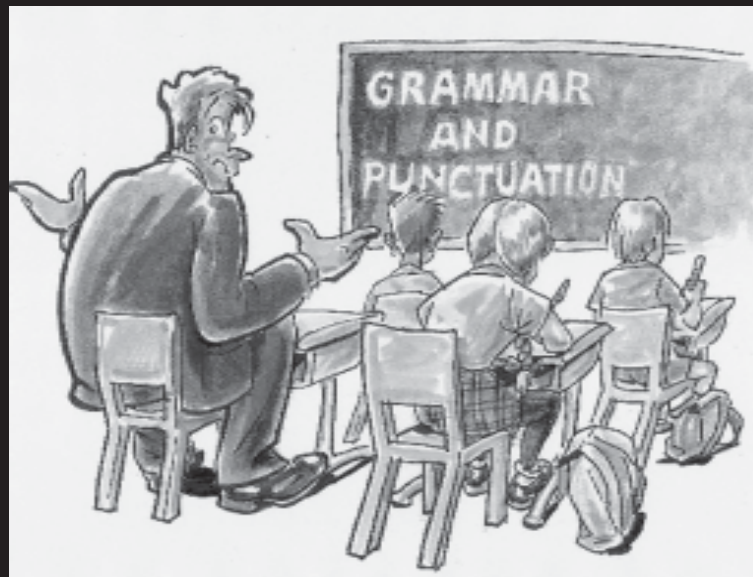


Dr. Dick Dewan

## WHY NOT LEARN ENGLISH ???

I'm afraid that the very title I've finalized for the present write-up may convey the sense equivocally. To be precise, the exact intention of my trying to make some efforts like this is to vehemently encourage the learning of English unquestionably by especially our young learners as this opens up vistas all around them. Really speaking, we find, English language, although a foreign tongue, has become as important as our own mother tongue for so many justifiable reasons and unavoidable purpose. We see no alternative except becoming bilingual in the context of Indian social life today. It is an irrefutable fact that English language plays its vital role in serving its purpose of second language where your so called mother tongue restrictively remains confined within yourselves only. We can't deny the fact that there are so much of indications that English will enjoy a special position in the multilingual society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A report appearing in The Statesman, 16<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2007, reads: "A recent survey conducted by Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) has identified the lack of bilingual schools to be a major reason behind growing dropout numbers, as the Hindi and Urdu speaking population in the city grows and Bengali medium schools languish in the absence of students."

It is of course no problem to make our people realize the importance of English language even in our daily life, but the crux of the matter is that our learners slothfully lack enthusiasm, motivation and seriousness in learning to his fullest capacity for the highest possible attainment.



**A recent survey conducted by Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) has identified the lack of bilingual schools to be a major reason behind growing dropout numbers, as the Hindi and Urdu speaking population in the city grows and Bengali medium schools languish in the absence of students.**

They seem to be half-hearted. Reluctance mars the level of his aspiration which he has to set for his achievement in his life. Despite the facilities, opportunity of favourable environment he has been provided with for congenial learning atmosphere he fails to avail of all this, let alone labour hard excessively exploiting or exploring situation for his own gain. He perfunctorily ignores all that what he actually should be mindful of. Owing to such unmindful behaviour and lethargic act of his for lack of proper understanding he is apt to miss great fortune of his life. He is likely to suffer for his sheer neglect of study of so important a language as English. A person well equipped with the skill and knowledge of major language like English may avail of the chance of placement in any sphere of lucrative business. Job opportunity is really high for a person with English language competence. But we take resort to effortless inert life of ease. This loathsome behaviour of ours hits us hard and we can't prosper.

When our students first come to class IX we don't fail to tell them that English has become so important a language that we can hardly afford to ignore it in our studies. It occupies today a place of international language and to enrich ourselves it has been rather obligatory for us all to learn this with all the seriousness. That is why, we see, English is made a compulsory second language to be studied for passing the public examination



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**It is after about a couple of decades of having abolished English from the primary school curriculum that West Bengal, having realized its gross mistake, is set to reintroduce it. The Board is trying to give set guidelines so that primary teachers help the children to cope with the subject from the very beginning of their school-life. We have now at least a reason to be gratified that the teaching is being done with the object of acquainting the students with English with the help of mother tongue and not through mother tongue.**

conducted by the education board for our obtaining a coveted certificate promising us of having become eligible to claim quite a suitable post. No pass in English – no successful result – no certificate even. Notwithstanding, some one or other fails to qualify in this very language subject. The blame for it may partly go to the deficiency of teaching the subject. We have been so oblivious that English had been banned in 1983 by the L.F. Government from the primary school curriculum to the much displeasure of the parents and guardians. This unwanted step invited virulent criticism from all possible quarters. The government was bound to yield to the pressure from the public to consider reinstating it at the primary stage and thus assuaged the disgruntled elements. By adopting such a policy the indigent folks were deprived of learning English in their very formative period. When the ICSE school children can so comfortably learn it is not known why our economically weaker section children should fall victim to the discriminatory policy of the Government. Why only the ICSE background children should gain an edge over our students who, because they are money-less, must be forced to attend English-less schools. Is it not a great injustice? They are made to look like a condemned lot who are not at all fit to take up any white-collar job.

An editorial, The Statesman—19<sup>th</sup> August 2004, rightly points out: English was almost the second mother tongue of the Bengali. ...Removing English from the curricula because it was regarded as the 'language of imperialism' has hampered generations living in shrinking world. Most countries have realized, including our neighbours in Communist China that globalization has made English the international language for commerce and trade. English-speaking Bengalis are extremely successful in all spheres around the world. By not equipping the next generation with the world-class English we are handicapping them in competing for their future. Then again another editorial, the Statesman – 28 August '04 reiterates the points : After years of railing against things foreign, and hung up on Swadeshi, even the RSS is finally forced to accept the importance of English, as a medium of communication and advancement ..... Now they have realized the importance of English after students from SVM (Saraswati Vidya Mandir –2300 schools run by the RSS across the country) are said to suffer from an "inferiority complex" compared to English medium students. What we can say now, most of our students are forced to work from a tremendous disadvantage for no fault of theirs but owing to sheer wicked policies and experiments of the so called political bigwigs. Don't you think that the poor victims of such a policy have to go deprived of the promising opportunities lying ahead and remain grappling with inadequate equipment for life? Their growth and development will be stunted should they desire for higher education or study abroad. This predicament as faced by the aspirants, we can say, is the adverse effect of the government's so called judicious policy of abolishing English with the purported aim to reach out the "downtrodden" masses.

India's official Hindi is loaded with Sanskrit coinages. That makes it a high-flown obscure language for most, causing communication barrier. It is not a colloquial Hindi spoken in homes across the North but a very Sanscritised version which is far removed from the language of the people. Hence, Jyoti Sanyal (The Statesman, 5 Oct '07) rightly observes: one possible solution could be to fall back on English. It had served as the official language during the two centuries of British rule. It is still the associate official language. Quite a considerable size of population in India use English. We also see that many educational books written at a literacy level in Hindi are apt to go beyond the comprehensibility, let alone the students or readers of non-Hindi speaking region. It is a happy sign that there is no dearth of institute of English in India, like CIEFL in Hyderabad with two more campuses in Lucknow and Shillong, devoted exclusively to producing teachers of English language even as India was heading towards making Hindi the sole official language of the country and the slogan *Angrezi hatao* was catching up. The Government has naturalised English as another Indian language (Sam Rajappa – The Statesman, 5 Sept. '07). We have in Kolkata, one Institute of English, Calcutta, founded in 1963, conducting its own examinations and conferring Diploma and Certificate recognized by the Higher Education Directorate. Even sixty years after independence we still feel the need to send our student aspirants abroad in order to have better prospects of livelihood and job opportunities. With full or just partial scholarships thousands of our scholars are going abroad in pursuit of higher studies; and here we see English stands in good stead.

The Save Education Committee (Sunanda Sanyal – The Statesman 13 Dec. '02) having convened an all India Education and Language Conferene in Calcutta, reminded the State and Central governments that English had inspired ideas of social justice which rid traditional Hinduism of its sinister class and caste hierarchy up to a point. It had merged numerous races speaking hundreds of languages and professing various faiths



into a common Indian identity. The Hindi zealots tried to throw English out in 1947. They failed. Thanks to Independence, the nation did not come to much harm at that point.. But if you removed English that was our language of opportunities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had since gained all the more importance, having become the language of science and culture. Devraj Singh Kalsi (The Statesman, 30 Sept.'07) emphasizes learning of English to be so essential as he finds the idea of setting a chain of institutes teaching students and adults to quarrel in English to have been not only innovative and profitable but also exciting. He advises us to practise quarrelling in English when the slightest opportunity comes our way so as to prepare ourselves and be mentally equipped to blast our boss if he does not deliver what he promises before we meekly cave in to his diktats. To me also it occurs that knowing English is to muster audacity, not to be submissive. This pays us commensurably.

One interesting news headline, "Queen's English has come to stay" appearing in the Statesman of 10<sup>th</sup> September'07 (if you have missed) flashes: Planning to immigrate to Britain? Just brush up your English grammar or get yourself enrolled in a course to learn the language. The British Government is considering new rules to make the knowledge of English compulsory for all migrant workers as one of the conditions for entry into the country..... They (all skilled migrants) will now be expected to speak, write and understand English, obtaining proof either by passing an internationally recognized English test or showing they have a degree from a course taught in English. So, I am tempted to say, we should waste no time to acquiesce that English is widely regarded as having become the global language. Around one in five of the world's population speaks English, and English has become the language of international commerce, popular culture and the Internet (David Graddol – 'The Future of English' , London: British Council). There has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English. The spread of English in recent years, is by any criterion, a remarkable phenomenon. There is no imminent danger to the English language, nor to its global popularity. Worldwide, it is said, there were (in 1995) over 1,400 million people living in countries where English has official status. By the year 2000, it was estimated that over one billion people would be learning English. English is the main language of books, newspapers, air-ports and air-traffic control,, international business and academic conferences, science technology, diplomacy, sport, international competitions, pop music and advertising. In many parts of the world English is taken into the fabric of social life. Suffice to say, English language is a window on the world. It is responsible for our contacts with the outside world, a link language both in India and abroad. We cannot dispense with the study of English. It will be suicidal to do without English.

Last, but not the least, may I quote some lines from Simon Jenki's write-up, " Taking the world in its stride" appearing in the Statesman,26 February 1995 ( reproduced from The Times, London) to buttress my point of view

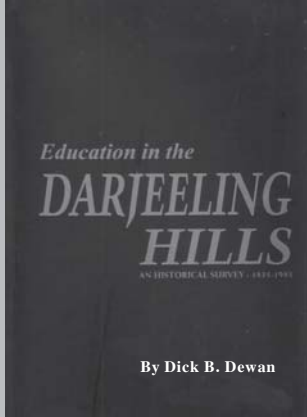
——— The sooner the world speaks English, the happier and more prosperous it will be. Those who do not speak it are at a universal disadvantage against those who do. English is the language of academic research, space travel and scientific discovery. English will do in Africa, Russia, West Asia, India, South-east Asia and Australasia. English has triumphed. To deny English supremacy is not to stand up for little nations or for cultural diversity. It simply keeps non-English speakers poor. It also costs million of pounds in translation. Further, he furnishes one illustration, as follows. One of the poorest states in South India, Kerala, introduced compulsory English in schools. It is now one of the richest, since Keralites can do business in any international tongue and find jobs in West-Asia. This has not damaged Keralite culture. This is but a few lines from Jenkin's. On the contrary, I may refer one grievance as expressed in a letter to the editor (The Statesman,Feb.1998). It lambasts that Sri Jyoti Basu has had no regrets about the fate of thousands of Bengali students who, because of their poor English, have lost their capacity to compete and hence are considered unemployable in both the corporate and government sectors. To add some more I find Sumitro Das' lines (The Statesman, 5 August 1997) serving well to hit at the point : With the abolition of English the Left Front effectively crippled the Bengali's capacity to migrate to other places in search of better opportunities, restricting his horizons and breeding in him a suffocating parochialism. He means to say, to speak in English is to be able to work practically anywhere in the country and to interact with those who think, feel and eat alike, share, more or less, the same set of values.....West Bengal furnishes us with an outstanding example of how the suppression of English can act as a force of social and economic retardation.

It is after about a couple of decades of having abolished English from the primary school curriculum that West Bengal, having realized its gross mistake, is set to reintroduce it. The Board is trying to give set guidelines so that primary teachers help the children to cope with the subject from the very beginning of their school-life. We have now at least a reason to be gratified that the teaching is being done with the object of acquainting the students with English with the help of mother tongue and not through mother tongue. A teaching module has also been supplied to the teachers for the mode of learning to be made joyful. Although it is said that the new learning process focuses on the teacher-student relationship it remains to see how education instructors devise new methods of teaching the language affording it to be learner-centered. It is heartening to note down that in an orientation programme on English language organised in the conference hall of the Siliguri Mahakuma Parishad for the primary school teachers, the minister, Mr Partha Dey said (Statesman News Service,12 June'07) : "As an internationally accepted medium of communication, everyone should know the language of English in the era of globalization. If the teachers were not comfortable with the language, they would not be able to teach the students properly. So, we have sought help from the British Council as they have many resource persons, experienced in conducting training programmes."

When the West Bengal Government has now been all set to make amends for having jeopardized the status of English language teaching atoning for its "historical miscalculations" I'm really afraid to say if the teaching of English is being done with much concern and gusto in the schools run under the State-board in this hill-region. To a keen observer, the education being imparted these days is only a dwindling affair and it looks like it is hardly anybody's concern. However, our students should realised that learning is great above all for which the urge should come from within. Knowing English very well can be very much equated to being educated well. Knowing it for speaking and writing is like holding a trump-card for winning any stake in our life. I say delightfully, you can walk an inch higher with full confidence. So, why not learn English to rise still higher and higher? Let me envy you for the position you'll hold, All the best.

*"The English language ceased to be the sole possession of the English sometime ago"* — - Salman Rushdie.

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# Nepali Nuances

Dr.S.B. Wangyel's  
latest book "Foot-  
prints in the  
Himalaya"  
is available in all  
leading book stalls in  
Darjeeling,  
Kalimpong, Gangtok  
& Siliguri

Review

"Dr. Sonam B. Wangyel is eastern Himalayan region's one of the most prolific writers in the English language. He has been a regular contributor to major journals like 'Himal, The Himalayan Magazine' (Kathmandu), 'The Statesman' (Nbplus Siliguri edition), 'Himalayan Times' (Kalimpong) and numerous other journals, souvenirs, directories and related materials. Besides his recent successful book on Sikkim and Darjeeling this collection of some of his essays is a wonderful reading that generates humour, sadness, surprise and occasionally ever manages to startle the reader. I thoroughly enjoyed it from the page to the last."

Buddhiman Yonzon  
Central Committee Member All  
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Parishad

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**Page Size 9" X 5"**  
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With this essay we commence a series on the amazing vitality of the Nepali tongue. The subtlety, complicatedness, and the sheer beauty of the exceptionally native nuances make it a very personal language. People talk of the complexities of the English and other languages but I am a firm believer that they are a poor second to Nepali. One has to be 'with it' for a very long time to grasp the fine idiosyncratic shades and the incredible earthy and at times wacky rationale of the Nepali language. Could the translation 'Losing bull: purging habit' make any sense to a non-Nepali speaker! The Englishman would rather prefer 'A bad workman quarrels with his tools' but that is too simple and far too straightforward for us and so we have '*Haruwa goruko chheruwa bani*' and only we, the Nepali speakers, can appreciate how well and ingeniously it has been coined.

But this essay and those that will follow are not about adages, proverbs and aphorisms but about words. And we will kick it off with '*khanu*' or the verb intransitive (and transitive) meaning 'to eat' and round it off with '*katnu*' or to cut. Can one eat a reprimand? Well, we can for '*Gali khanu*' is a common exercise, after all, '*hamiharu gali khadai ta hurkayko ho*'. We have a way of dealing with the unpleasant aspects in our lives and like eating a reprimand or rebuke we simply chew and swallow anything negative that comes our way. Therefore, we might lose but we can never get thrashed simply because we eat whatever thrashing is doled to us or '*hami dhulai khancha*', and to cite a few other examples we have '*dhoka khanu*' (to eat a duping), '*thesh khanu*' (to eat a stumbling) '*laat khanu*' (to eat a kick) etc. And the menu of edibles does not get any shorter for we have such delicacies like smoke or cigarettes (*sigrate khanu*), promises (*kasam khanu*), salary (*jagir khanu*), business or trade (*bechi khanu*) etc., but the icing on the cake must be, and unlike in the English where one would steal a kiss, we eat a kiss (*moai khanu* or *chumba khanu* in our hills), after all, the primary function of the oral cavity and its appendages is to eat.

The next word I have chosen is '*katnu*' (verb transitive) for 'to cut'. Cutting, to us, is an innate inclination and every house has a *khukuri* to prove that. But we cut many more things than physical objects and so we, of the hills, are at home with the expression '*dara katnu*' (to cross a ridge) and '*dara kataidinu*' (to chuck it over the ridge). Similarly, we have '*phaal katnu*' (to jump over) and sometimes we almost kill it by saying '*phaal marnu*'. Occasionally we set aside, or should I say cut, everything else and concentrate on a particular subject and this we term '*bichar katnu*'. Similarly, when we slice the flow of another's speech with an interjection it is '*baat katnu*' and when a soldier decides to '*naam katnu*' he is not chopping off his names to pieces but simply cutting it off the regiment's roster. There are other terms like '*hisaab katnu*' (to deduct, or cut, from an account), '*arkal katnu*' (to estimate), but '*nak katnu*' (to be disgraced or to be subtracted of respect) was once an actual lopping of the snout, beside of course the associated deduction of status. When Prithwinarayan Shah conquered Kirtipur, he was so provoked by the Kirtipurians' stiff resistance, he ordered the noses of all the male inhabitants of the place be chopped off, save children at breast and musicians skilled at playing wind instruments, and the order was carried out to the last detail. History books have never fully explained the mercy granted to the children and the musicians and my guess is that the children were of no threat while the musicians were necessary to welcome the all conquering Maharaja into his new domain. Mercifully, today '*nak katnu*' does not involve physical mutilation but just partial trimming off of social standing or reputation. Finally to my favourite 'cut' i.e.,

'*doko namlo katnu*'. Here '*doko namlo*' refers to the drudgery or the daily grind of hard physical labour a servant, slave or an impoverished person undergoes and when one is liberated from such an agonizing existence through a generous donor, a sudden windfall or children landing up with good employment it is equivalent to '*doko namlo katnu*'.





This priceless photograph has Raja Dorjee of Bhutan and the then Crown Prince of Nepal, King Mahendra posing for a photograph in Kalimpong in the year 1952.

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